

REMARKS

Claims 1-3, 13, 14, 24 and 25 have been rejected. Claims 4-8, 10-12 and 15 contain allowable subject matter and claims 9, 16-23 and 26 are withdrawn.

I. Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,010,956 to Takiguchi

The Examiner has rejected claims 1, 2, 3, 13, 14, 24 and 25 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Takiguchi. Since, however, the allowable subject matter of claim 4 has been incorporated into claim 1, Applicant submits that the rejection of claim 1 is now moot.

Also, since claims 2, 3, 13, 14, 24 and 25 are dependent upon claim 1, Applicant submits that such claims are patentable at least by virtue of their dependency.

II. Allowable Subject Matter

As set forth above, claims 4-8, 10-12 and 15 contain allowable subject matter. By this Amendment, Applicant has incorporated claim 4 into claim 1. Accordingly, claim 4 has been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer.

III. Rejoinder of Withdrawn Claims

Claims 9, 16-23 and 26 are currently withdrawn as being directed to a non-elected invention. As set forth on page 4 of the Office Action, the Examiner maintains that a complete reply to the office action must include cancellation of the nonelected claims or other appropriate action. Since, however, claim 1 is now in allowable form, Applicant respectfully requests that

the Examiner **rejoin** withdrawn claims 9, 16-23 and 26 as they “depend from or otherwise require all the limitations of an allowable claim” (i.e., claim 1) (MPEP §821.04).

IV. Conclusion

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,

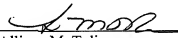
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